

Week Ending Friday, February 21, 1997

**Message on the Observance of
Presidents' Day**

February 14, 1997

I am pleased to join all Americans in celebrating Presidents' Day, 1997.

Each year at this time, we reflect with pride and gratitude on the achievements of our former Presidents; and we pay special tribute to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, two extraordinary leaders whose clarity of vision and strength of character did so much to shape our country's destiny.

Presidents Washington and Lincoln led America at pivotal moments in our history, moments that profoundly affected our nation's character and course for decades to follow. George Washington helped to win our liberty and give us a democracy strong enough to endure through the centuries and flexible enough to survive the fresh challenges that face each generation of Americans. During the dark days of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln held together the frayed fabric of our Union and reaffirmed our founders' commitment to the self-evident truths of liberty and equality.

Today we stand at another defining moment in our national journey. We must chart a course for America into a new century and a new millennium. Inspired by the wisdom of Washington and strengthened by the determination of Lincoln, we will build a new American community, based on responsible citizenship and a resolve to realize the full potential of all our citizens. In this way, we can best keep faith with the remarkable leaders whose memory we honor today.

Best wishes for a wonderful observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement Announcing the
Emergency Board in the Dispute
Between American Airlines and the
Allied Pilots Association**

February 14, 1997

As you know, I have been closely following the labor negotiations between American Airlines and its pilots represented by the Allied Pilots Association. I want to compliment the parties, the National Mediation Board, its chairman Kenneth Hipp, and mediator Harry Bickford for their hard work to date. Progress has been made over the last several days and especially in the last few hours. Despite these good faith efforts, however, the parties have been unable to reach a tentative agreement by the 12:01 a.m. strike deadline.

To facilitate an agreement, and because I believe that a strike would have an immediate and adverse impact on the traveling public, I am creating a Presidential emergency board to work with the parties and to make recommendations regarding a resolution. No strike will occur while the Presidential emergency board is in place.

A strike would cause a severe disruption to both domestic and international air transportation. American Airlines is the Nation's second largest airline; it carries over 220,000 passengers every day. It would be extremely difficult for other carriers to fill the void. The Department of Transportation has estimated that approximately 43,000 passengers per day would not be accommodated by other airlines. The disruption would be particularly felt in Dallas, Miami, Chicago, New York, and Puerto Rico where American provides a large percentage of existing flights. It would also affect the nations of the Caribbean, many of whom rely heavily on American Airlines for air service to and from their shores.

In the event of a strike, most of the 90,000 American and American Eagle employees would be placed on leave. The majority of these employees are based in Texas, Illinois,

New York, California, Florida, and Oklahoma. Many of the elected officials from the States led by Senators Graham and Hutchison and Representative Martin Frost and Governor Chiles have made clear to my administration that a strike would severely affect their economies.

American transports almost 10 percent of the Nation's air cargo. A strike could increase and cause delays for shippers and the U.S. Postal Service.

I was also particularly concerned that a strike would be especially disruptive over a holiday weekend, when hundreds of thousands of citizens rely on our air transit system.

This dispute needs to be resolved as soon as possible. I urge the parties to continue to use the National Mediation Board and the Presidential emergency board to redouble their efforts to reach an agreement. They owe that to each other and to the traveling public.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 15, 1997

Good morning. Today I'm pleased to announce a major new step in our efforts to protect America's children, a universal system for attaching child safety seats in cars. This system, developed by a blue ribbon commission of industry and consumer groups, will make safety seats easier to install and more secure on the road. It will save young lives.

In my State of the Union Address, I issued a call to action to all Americans to prepare our people for the 21st century. Building strong families is central to that mission. That's why we must do all that we can to help parents do all they can to live up to one of the greatest responsibilities anyone can have, to care for a child.

Parents are always on the lookout to make sure their children are safe. That's especially true when you get in the car. Thousands of children are killed in car accidents every year; tens of thousands more are injured.

Even though America's cars and roads are the safest in the world, we must make them safer. That's why today, the final day of National Child Passenger Safety Week, I'd like to talk with you about the steps we're taking to save more lives on the road.

First, we will continue to stress the fundamental rules of safety: seatbelts, safety seats for small children, children 12 and under buckled up and in the back seat. Last month, I instructed the outgoing Transportation Secretary, Federico Peña, to develop a plan to get more Americans to wear seatbelts. I'm delighted to be joined today by our new Transportation Secretary, Rodney Slater, who came to us from the Federal Highway Administration. He knows a lot about this issue, and he will present that plan to me in March. When he does, I will be ready to review it and act on it.

We must also continue to support law enforcement in its effort to increase compliance with safety laws.

Second, we have taken action to make it clear that on America's roads there is no room for alcohol or drugs. We fought to make it illegal for all young people under 21 to drive with any alcohol in their blood, and 34 States now have these zero-tolerance laws. We're also developing a plan to make teens pass a drug test as a condition of getting a driver's license.

Third, we've worked to make air bags, one of our most important safety tools, safer for children. All cars and safety seats now come with warning labels to remind drivers to keep children in the back seat. Plans are underway to permit manufacturers to install less powerful air bags and to phase in a new generation of "smart" air bags. Air bags have saved a lot of lives. With these improvements, they'll save even more.

And today we're taking a fourth step: We will make child safety seats safer. These seats are the most effective safety device to protect very young children. In car crashes, they reduce the risk of death or serious injury to infants by 70 percent. They cut the fatality and injury rate for children aged 1 to 4 in half. But while all 50 States have car seat laws, studies show that 40 percent of the time young children do not even ride in safety seats, and even when they are placed in child